

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 9228

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 19787

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINR, TH

SUBJECT: BIOGRAPHIC INFORMATION ON WICHET SUNTHAYAKOM, THAI
AMBASSADOR TO PAKISTAN

REF: ISLAMABAD 10686

1. ISLAMABAD IS WICHET'S FIRST AMBASSADORIAL ASSIGNMENT. HE HAD SERVED THERE SINCE MAY 1973. PREVIOUSLY HE WAS DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE PROTOCOL DEPARTMENT SINCE SEPTEMBER 1972.
2. WICHET WAS BORN SEPTEMBER 21, 1923 IN SURAT THANI, SOUTH THAILAND. HE GRADUATED FROM A BOARDING SCHOOL IN SURAT THANI IN 1938 AND HIGH SCHOOL AT WAT BOPHIT PIMUK, IN BANGKOK, IN 1942. HE GRADUATED FROM THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY, IN BANGKOK, IN 1946.
3. WICHET BEGAN HIS FOREIGN MINISTRY CAREER IN JUNE 1942 AS A CLERK IN THE PROTOCOL DIVISION OF THE PROTOCOL DEPARTMENT WHILE STILL A UNIVERSITY STUDENT. FROM 1947-1949 HE WORKED IN THE TELEGRAPH SECTION OF THE CENTRAL DIVISION OF THE OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE, MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS (MFA). IN 1949 HE WENT TO THE THAI EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON WHERE HE SERVED TWO YEARS AS A CLERK, AND ANOTHER TWO YEARS AS THIRD SECRETARY.

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4. WHEN HE RETURNED TO BANGKOK, WICHET WAS MADE ACTING CHIEF OF THE RECEPTION DIVISION, PROTOCOL DEPARTMENT. IN 1955 HE BECAME A SECOND SECRETARY IN THE COMMERCIAL DIVISION, OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY. THEN FROM 1957-1960 HE WAS CHIEF OF THE ECONOMIC SECTION, AMERICA DIVISION. THEN HE BECAME CHIEF OF THE SOUTH ASIA, FAR EAST, AND AFRICA DIVISION OF THE POLITICAL DEPARTMENT.

5. IN 1963, WICHET WENT TO KUALA LUMPUR AS A FIRST SECRETARY. HE LATER SERVED AS CONSUL IN KOTABAHRU, KELANTAN STATE, MALAYSIA, BEGINNING IN FEBRUARY 1966.

6. FOLLOWING HIS ASSIGNMENT IN MALAYSIA, HE WAS A FIRST SECRETARY IN THE TREATY AND LEGAL DEPARTMENT, MFA. LATER HE SERVED AS THE CHIEF OF THE PROTOCOL DIVISION, THEN DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL, AND FINALLY DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE PROTOCOL DEPARTMENT.

7. COMMENT: THIS EMBASSY'S RECENT DEALINGS WITH WICHET HAVE RELATED ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY TO PROTOCOL MATTERS. WHILE WICHET WAS GENERALLY KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT THE MATTERS HE DEALT WITH PERSONALLY, HE DID NOT INFUSE THE PROTOCOL DEPARTMENT WITH MUCH ZEAL OR EFFICIENCY. MANY ITEMS OF BUSINESS, ESPECIALLY THOSE RELATING TO DIPLOMATIC PRIVILEGES FOR VARIOUS ELEMENTS OF THE ENORMOUS U.S. MISSION HERE, HAD TO BE PRODDED ALONG THROUGH OUR CONTACTS IN THE SECRETARIAT TO THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS.

8. IN FAIRNESS TO WICHET, EFFICIENCY IN PROCESSING AMERICAN EMBASSY BUSINESS THROUGH PROTOCOL DID IMPROVE SOMEWHAT DURING HIS TENURE. ALSO, WICHET DID PERSONALLY APPROVE SOME EXCEPTIONS TO RTG REGULATIONS AND POLICIES FOR THIS EMBASSY WHICH HE COULD JUST AS EASILY HAVE DISAPPROVED. HE WAS, HOWEVER, RELUCTANT TO FOLLOW-UP ON DOCUMENTS ONCE THEY HAD LEFT HIS OFFICE. WHATEVER HIS REASONS, THIS RELUCTANCE CERTAINLY DID NOT ENDEAR THE PROTOCOL DEPARTMENT TO THIS EMBASSY AS IT FORCED US TO DO FOR OURSELVES MUCH OF THE LEG WORK A CHIEF OF PROTOCOL WOULD NORMALLY UNDERTAKE.

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9. WE HAVE NO REASON TO BELIEVE THAT WICHET IS NOT PERSONALLY FRIENDLY TO AMERICANS. IT IS MORE LIKELY THAT HE WAS THE CUTTING EDGE OF A FOREIGN MINISTRY REAR GUARD EFFORT TO HARASS US ON MANY OF THE FOLLOW-ON SUPPORT ARRANGEMENTS FOR OUR MILITARY PRESENCE HERE. THIS STEMMED FROM IN PART MFA RESENTMENT THAT THE THEN MILITARY LEADERSHIP OF THE RTG HAD NEGOTIATED THE BASING OF OUR TROOPS DIRECTLY, RATHER THAN THROUGH MFA.

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